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## Shadows of War

Premier Nikita Khrushchev's speech in Moscow this week, in which he warned the Soviet people of the possibility of war over Berlin and suggested that the Soviet Union might call up reserves and increase its forces on the Western border, has quickened fears of war all over the world. Taken with the "firm stand" in Washington and the mobilization measures ordered by the United States, it creates the impression of the two Great Powers rushing relentlessly toward each other like two express trains on a single track.

How far are these fears justified? Mr. Khrushchev has demonstrated both his determination to settle the Berlin issue on his terms and his fear that the West is preparing to force a conflict on the issue. Yet it does not follow from this that he is ready to precipitate a clash by some violent act such as a blockade of West Berlin. From the Soviet standpoint, there are at least five strong reasons against such a course.

1. Russia is now experiencing food shortages and other economic difficulties. These would be greatly aggravated not only by war but by any prolonged mobilization in expectation of war.

2. The Soviet Government cannot rely on its satellites. Its troubles in East Germany, Poland and Hungary must still be fresh in Moscow's memory. It is entirely probable that substantial underground movements still exist.

3. The Russians have a clear superiority over the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in conventional forces stationed in or near Germany. It is doubtful, however, that once hostilities started they could be kept at the "conventional" or non-atomic level. The side that was losing would be under immense pressure to resort to tactical atomic weapons, and from that it would be a relentless process of escalation up to the use of the giant hydrogen bombs and the intercontinental missiles. Mr. Khrushchev himself seemingly anticipates such a development. He warned the American people that Soviet missiles could bring war to their homes—thereby obliquely warning the Russian people as well that atomic destruction could also come to their homes.

The Soviet leaders and people might be willing to risk a conventional war for objectives they consider important. A nuclear war, however, is too destructive and too unpredictable a gamble for any sane statesman, however determined and ruthless. Despite setbacks, Russia has made immense economic progress in the last 40 years, above all in the last decade. The Government has been promising its citizens a still more glittering future. It is hard to imagine any Russian throwing all this away for the sake of West Berlin.

4. In the background is the problem of China. If Russia and the United States mutually devastate each other with hydrogen bombs, China will be left as the unquestioned leader of the Communist bloc, perhaps

as the master of the world. The prospect can hardly be a welcome one in Moscow. It is perhaps significant that in his analysis of the world situation for his people, Mr. Khrushchev said not a word about possible support from China.

5. The Soviet Government, at the moment, is doing quite well without warfare. Its prestige has never been higher. It has been able to advance its influence and the cause of Communism in various parts of the world by means of economic aid, propaganda and subversion. Why abandon this proved formula for the uncertainties of a war?

These factors should inhibit the Soviet Government from deliberately starting hostilities. What of the other side? It is hard to avoid the feeling that there is more danger of the United States applying the fatal spark. Mr. Khrushchev was not exaggerating too much when he spoke of "war psychosis" in the United States. Over the past 15 years, the American people have been whipped to a state of hatred and fear of Communism reminiscent of the religious wars in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. Some U.S. writings and speeches seem to echo the words of the fanatical Austrian Emperor who launched the Thirty Years War: "Better a desert than a country full of heretics!" President Kennedy is to a considerable extent a prisoner of this public attitude; his freedom of manoeuvre is limited. Nor is he entirely the master of his own Government. There is always the possibility that in a moment of crisis the wild men in the Pentagon or the Central Intelligence Agency may take matters into their own hands. This is, in fact, a very dangerous of all the potentialities in the present situation.

Against this background, it is surely not enough for the allies of the United States to "stand firm" and leave the initiative to Premier Khrushchev. They should be seeking a way to prevent matters coming to a crisis.

The first step in this direction must be to recognize that the Soviet Union is not entirely in the wrong over Berlin—that it has a case. The Russians, in fact, have a real and vital interest in preventing the emergence of a united, sovereign and re-armed German Reich. It is an interest they share with every other European nation. After all, the Second World War ended only 16 years ago, even though it seems to have been totally forgotten in the United States. Fear of Germany, and of another German "drive to the East", is unquestionably the basic motive behind Soviet manoeuvrings in Central Europe. The NATO nations have aggravated these fears—and perhaps precipitated the present crisis—by pushing on German rearmament and by talking of giving the Germans nuclear weapons.

Surely it is not beyond the power of Western Intelligence to start negotiations and to work out a solution that will preserve Western interests in West Berlin and at the same time meet Russia's legitimate security needs.